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HAROLD ROORBACH, Publisher, 9 Murray St., New York.

NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL

AN ORIGINAL COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY

WYBERT REEVE

NEW AMERICAN EDITION CORRECTLY REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL AUTHORIZED ACTING EDITION, WITH THE ORIGINAL CASTS OF THE CHARACTERS, SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS, TIME OF REPRESENTATION, DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUMES, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, DIAGRAMS OF THE STAGE SETTINGS, SIDES OF ENTRANCE AND EXIT, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS, EXPLANATIONS OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS, ETC., AND ALL OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

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NEW YORK
HAROLD ROORBACH
PUBLISHER

PR 1273
Lg 835

12-37968



NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL.

Performed at the Royal Charing Cross Theatre, London, (under the Management of Miss Fowler), Saturday, January 8th, 1870.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN HERBERT MARCHMONT	{ <i>A newly married man</i> . . . }	Mr. Wybert Reeve.
LIEUTENANT WORTHINGTON	(<i>a bachelor</i>) . . .	Mr. Phipps.
DR. BRUNT	{ <i>Blunt by nature, and an old married man.</i> }	Mr. Flockton.
CAPTAIN POPPET	(<i>a man of few words</i>) . . .	Mr. Temple.
SMART	(<i>a London tiger</i>)	Mr. F. Robson.
JAMES BANKS	{ <i>Gardener and assistant foot-man</i> }	Mr. Brinsley Sheridan.
MRS. HERBERT MARCHMONT	{ <i>A young wife, afflicted with ennui</i> }	Miss Fowler.
MRS. DR. BRUNT	(<i>"a great creature"</i>)	Mrs. St. Henry
MRS. CAPTAIN POPPET	(<i>a lady rather snubbed</i>)	Miss Maxe.
MISS CLARA SMEATON	(<i>spinster</i>)	Miss Towers.
SALLY MAYBUD	{ <i>A country blossom and maid of all-work.</i> }	Miss Harriet Coveney.

TIME OF PERFORMANCE: ONE HOUR AND FORTY MINUTES.

Costumes—Modern.

SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENTS.

CAPTAIN HERBERT MARCHMONT, formerly one of the gayest young fellows in town, having married and settled down in the country, finds himself decidedly a victim of petticoat government. His wife affects languor and delicate health, and keeps him in close seclusion from his former friends, lest they may lead him astray. It happens that a party of these friends visiting at a neighboring estate, has discovered the Captain's retreat with a suspicion of his true position. Just after he has been wheedled into taking the dog and the baby out for an airing, two of these friends, LIEUT. WORTHINGTON and DR. BRUNT, enter unannounced, greet the Captain heartily, inquire after his wife, and manage to secure a hint of his domestic relations, though the Captain stoutly maintains his independence of the

apron string. MRS. MARCHMONT then appears, turns a very cold shoulder to the visitors, and commands the Captain to follow her instantly and attend to his family duties. Torn between his wife's repeated summons and his friends' evident enjoyment of his discomfiture, the dashing Captain is constrained to obey the imperative commands of his better half, though emphatically asserting the stern obstinacy of his disposition in matters conjugal when alone in the bosom of his family. BRUNT and WORTHINGTON now determine to shame the Captain out of his weak subjection and put a stop to his wife's making a fool of him. They, accordingly, bring his other friends to the house, arriving in time to see the gallant Captain emerge, laden with dog and toys, blowing a child's trumpet and wheeling his infant's perambulator—the situation provoking extreme mirth on one side and deep chagrin on the other.

In pursuance of their plan to cure the Captain, his friends send him an invitation, with the positive threat, unless he responds within a half hour, to storm his fortress again. At the end of a conjugal scene in which MRS. MARCHMONT consents, unwillingly, to receive her husband's former friends, the latter arrive, are presented to her and invited to dine. At dinner, DR. BRUNT intentionally passes the bottle very freely, with a view to getting MARCHMONT somewhat overcome, so that he may forget or ignore his wife's strict discipline in a measure. On the return of the ladies to the drawing-room, MRS. MARCHMONT boastfully relates to her lady visitors how she has cured her lord of all his ante-nuptial irregularities, and keeps him in subjection; but in the midst of her recital, the Captain appears, at the head of his male guests, half intoxicated and wholly defiant of his wife's supremacy, to the latter's amazement and the visitors' unconcealed delight.

The dinner episode, however, proves only partly successful, since the Captain is obliged to do domestic penance for it, though he has begun to rebel. His friends, fearing that MRS. MARCHMONT may destroy her own and her husband's happiness by pursuing her present course, arrange that the Captain and his servants must pretend sudden and violent illness, taking the gardener and maid into their confidence. MARCHMONT, being really fond of his wife, gladly enters the plot, and simulates extreme prostration. The servants becoming equally incapacitated, MRS. MARCHMONT is thrown upon her own resources and forced to stir about at last, and minister to her husband's pretended wants. Under the pressure of necessity, she discards her *ennui* and laziness, makes the Captain comfortable and actually cooks a chop for him. In the midst of general applause at her success, she discovers the plot laid against her, but perceives the justice of the situation and assures her husband that it is not too late to prove that she can be a wife worthy of the name. Amid general congratulations, the Captain declares that, no matter what may befall now, his wife, as wife, will prove NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL.

PROPERTIES.

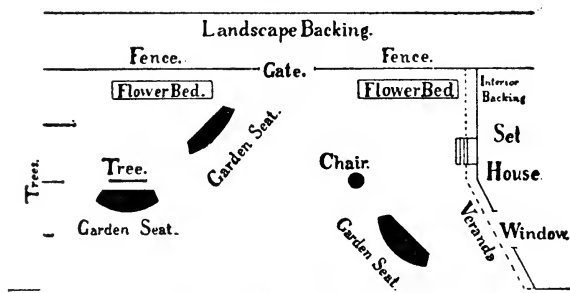
ACT I.—Two cabbages for JAMES. Gun, pipe, tobacco and matches for MARCHMONT. Smelling-bottle for SALLY. Letter for SMART. A small dog, child's tin trumpet, assortment of toys and baby's perambulator.

ACT II.—Furniture as per scene-plot. Writing materials and bell on table up L. Shawl on chair. Chessmen on table up R. Bell off stage, L. Bottle on tray, and coin for JAMES. Letter for SMART. Smelling-bottle and fan for MRS. MARCHMONT.

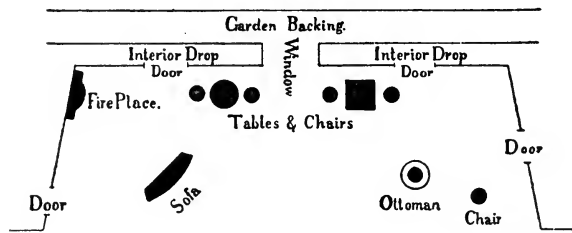
ACT III.—Fan, scent-bottle, shawl and books for SALLY to bring on. Handkerchief, glass of water, grid-iron, chop on plate, tray, tablecloth and table appointments for MRS. MARCHMONT. Two banknotes for BRUNT. Bandage and nightcap for JAMES. Head bandage for SALLY. Powder and puff for MARCHMONT. Crash off stage, L.

STAGE SETTINGS.

Act I.



Acts II. and III.



SCENE PLOT.

ACT I.—Garden in 4 G, backed with landscape drop in 5 G. Fence in 4 G, running across the stage, with a gate, C. Flower beds each side of gate. Tree wings in 1, 2 and 3 G., R. Chair L. C. Garden seats up R. and down L. Tree R., with seat in front of it. Set house L., running back to 4 G.,

with window facing the audience and entrance in the return piece. Interior backing in 4 G., behind house. Grass cloth down.

ACTS II. and III.—Parlor set in 3 G., backed with garden drop in 4 G. French window, C. Doors (with interior backings) R. C. and L. C. in flat. Fire place R. 3 E. Doors R. 1 E. and L. 2 E. Sofa down R. Ottoman and chair down L. Chess-table and two chairs up R. Table and two chairs up L.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The player is supposed to face the audience. R., means right; L., left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C., left of centre; D. F., door in the flat or scene running across the back of the stage; R. F., right side of the flat; L. F., left side of the flat; R. D., right door; L. D., left door; 1 E., first entrance; 2 E., second entrance; U. E., upper entrance; 1, 2 or 3 G., first, second or third grooves; UP STAGE, toward the back; DOWN STAGE, towards the footlights.

R.

R. C.

C.

L. C.

L.

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NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL.

ACT I.

Scene.—*Exterior and garden of Captain Herbert's villa. House set L., window facing audience, door in return-piece and interior backing. Verandah with creepers trailing over it; statues and flowers about scene; tree R. with seat under it; terrace or railings, gate C. Back drop, a pretty rural landscape. Garden chair, L., and one up stage, R.*

Enter SALLY MAYBUD, *through window singing, speaks as she gathers flowers and arranges them into a nosegay.*

Sally. What a lovely morning it is, to be sure; and how sweet the flowers smell—as my rural sweetheart, James Banks, would say “it’s quite hodoriferous.” I really ain’t got patience with missus—she seldom gets up until the middle of the day, and when she does, why lawks-a-daisy-me, if she ain’t too lazy to feed herself. If I was only her husband for half-an-hour, I’d let her know “what’s what” as the saying is—(*sitting down L. C., making a nosegay and singing:*)

“To the fields, I carry my milking pail
On a Mayday morning early,” &c.

Enter SMART, R. U. E.

Smart. (*aside*) How she warbles, she shames the nightingale!

Sally. Master is a good, kind, soft-hearted gentleman! he waits on her like a child—it’s “Herbert this,” and “Herbert that;” talk about not calling his “soul his own”—he dares not say his head is his own, unless she gives him permission. If I was a man, and had such a wife, oh, I’d be—I’d be—an out-and-outer, that I would. (*singing again*)

Smart. (*advancing, having heard latter part of speech*) I have the honor to inform you, you *are* an out-and-outer (*she jumps up*

on hearing his voice, and looks confused) by many degrees the most splendiferous out-and-outer, my optics have met with,—sweet dafodil of the early morning!

Sally. Oh, sir, don't, you take one's breath away! I feel quite flustered (*aside*) really a very nice young man!

Smart. (*both bow extravagantly*) Did it fluster the timid fawn? (*aside*) really a very nice young woman! I shall make myself agreeable in this quarter.

Sally. Might I ask, the object of your business here?

Smart. You are the object, and sich an object is not seen every day.

Sally. Oh, sir, as I said before, don't! (*bowing repeated*)

Smart. Don't in a lady's case, always means do! (*sings*) "Meet me by moonlight alone," &c.

Sally. Certainly not, young man, such going's on for a spinster, ain't at all right and proper. (*sits L.*)

Smart. All things is proper, to proper people—the world would not be half so indelicate, were it not for the natural indelicacy of our imaginations. (*takes chair and sits across it*) After which piece of philosophy, let us first proceed to business, then we can make love after. Your name, fair Zephyr, is Cleopatra Angelica—

Sally. No it is not; it is Sally, if you please, sir.

Smart. (*aside*) "Sally if you please, sir," what a sinking in poetry; (*aloud*) but the "Sally" don't please me, my dear—it's decidedly vulgar—and pray, what is the continuation of your abbreviated, sponsorial, indefinite harticle.

Sally. My other name is "Maybud."

Smart. Better, decidedly better! "Maybud" is good! "May" the birth of flowers, "Bud" the flowery birth—subtract the "Sally" and leave the "Maybud," then it's delicious! What is your master's, or I should say, your governor's name?

Sally. Captain Herbert Marchmont.

Smart. The very man! You have a mistress—a young 'un?

Sally. Yes, twelve months old.

Smart. Twelve months! why, then she must have been a married woman, before she was born, and can't have cut her teeth yet.

Sally. Oh, I beg parding; you said "young 'un"—I thought you meant the baby.

Smart. No, I was not alludin' to the felicitous hoff-spring of domestic connuberality; I was meaning your mistress is a young woman, Miss Maybud, and I wish to know, looking on the governor and governess, with the eyes of a lady's maid—

Sally. My eyes are a maid of-all-work's at present. I do all sorts of duties, but I hopes to rise.

Smart. (*aside*) Like dough without yeast—like a bud without a stalk, she only hopes to rise—poor thing! Nothing beneath a

lady's maid, finds a corner in the lining under my waistcoat. (*aloud*) Well, with the eyes of an "all sorts," what is your opinion of the upper crust in this house? (*they rise*)

Sally. You mean the family? As for the master, he is a real, good-looking, nice gentleman, but missus makes a complete fool of him; he follows her about like a spaniel, and never is allowed to have his own way.

Smart. Goodness gracious me! What a pity to see human masculine manhood, so sunk beneath its spear.

Sally. She is dreadful lazy too, and has always got something the matter with her; the physic comes in by the gallon, pills by the bushel, and novels by the cartload. Some folks call her pretty, but people's tastes differ—I've seen ladies much prettier.

Smart. When you looked in the glass, of course. (*bowing repeated*) We understand—we London swells know, the surest way to set two women by the ears—is to pretend love to both at the same time and swear each, to the other, has the prettiest face we ever seed. However, as I said before, to business! You must know my gentleman, is a friend of your gentleman's—he and some acquaintances, are now staying at Squire Beech's, Oak Hall, about a mile from here, and they have sent me over to make inquiries, as they are determined to rout him out.

Enter JAMES BANKS, *at back*, L. U. E.—*dressed as a gardener, a large cabbage in his hand; he stands at back, looking with surprise.*

(*continues speaking*) You most not mention having seen me, then; some other time. (*singing*) "Thoul't meet me in the garding, Sally," &c, (*going up, meets JAMES at back*) Ha, ha, ha! good-day, Chawbacon! (*struts out*, R. U. E.)

Banks. I'll "Chawbacon" thee nob with this cabbage! Take that, Mr. Jack O'Dandy! (*throws it after him*) There goes two-pence of master's money, and all through you. (*advancing*) You young wagabone—you ought to know better, than to be a bowing, and a ducking to a dandy chap like that, for all the world like a Cochin China with the spasms.

Sally. That was London perliteness, James.

Banks. Was it? Then, ecod, throwing that cabbage at his head were country politeness. What did he want here, chirruping about your meeting him in the garding?

Sally. It was a song, you stupid. That gentleman's gentleman is an old friend of the captain's—he came to inquire if he lived here.

Banks. Did he? We don't want any of them sort o' folks, I can tell 'ee. This Lunnon life, as they calls it, first turned our missus's head. She were a nice lass till she went there, and took it into her noddle, it wer fashionable to be ill and do nought. If you want me for a husband, lass, thee mun be useful.

Sally. (*indignantly*) Me your wife? Well I like that!

Banks. Of course thee does! Where is the lass that wouldn't, I should like to know? Now don't turn up thee nose—it be a winkin' at the moon already. Thou'rt not every man's cattle, I can tell 'ee.

Sally. I am no man's cattle yet, thank goodness.

Banks. No, but, like the rest o' the lasses, yer living in hopes; and if thee can't get corn, theel't be glad enough to put up with grass and stubble when the time comes. I'll go and get another cabbage, for cook is waitin'. Think o' what I said, wench,—when I marry thee, it'll be for charity: ecod, but it will, though.

(*exit, L. U. E.*)

Sally. What a rude bear he is, to talk such nonsense: Ah! (*sighing*) The difference between him and that smart young London gentleman in the top boots! Oh, those top boots! I'll wear their image next my heart.

Enter MRS MARCHMONT, *very languidly, from house, L.*

Mrs. M. (*calling*) Sally, Sally! (*SALLY goes to her*) Lead me to a seat, will you? I really am so weak I can hardly move. (*SALLY does so—MRS. MARCHMONT crosses, and sits R., on seat near tree*) How oppressive the sun is; why does it shine so?

Sally. Don't know, mam, except because it's its nature.

Mrs. M. Do not answer so pertly. What would I not give to be a strong healthy girl like you! (*looking at her*) I don't know, though, it would hardly be worth while; there is nothing romantic about you, you have such vulgar red cheeks.

Sally. Well, mam, I don't paint them; air and exercise does that.

Mrs. M. Air and exercise, indeed! You are talking nonsense! I walked twice round the garden yesterday, and it did not raise a blush on mine—not that I wish for vulgar cheeks.

Sally. Why, mam, there is not a rose that blows, that mine have not been compared to!

Mrs. M. Very likely, men generally talk in that stupid way before marriage.

Sally. You don't call the rose vulgar, mam?

Mrs. M. Yes, I do; it is often objectionably large, and coarse—I prefer a lily complexion.

Sally. Saving your presence, I prefer nature, and think *that* is prettiest which remains as Nature made it.

Mrs. M. How dare you chatter so! When once your tongue is set in motion there is no stopping it. Pluck me some flowers. (*SALLY gives the bouquet she has made*) The scent may revive me. Where is your master?

Sally. He went out shooting about eight o'clock, and has not yet returned.

Mrs. M. Eight o'clock, indeed! Disturbing one's rest in the

middle of the night like that ! He might have more consideration for my health.

Sally. He tried to be very quiet, and said he hadn't disturbed you.

Mrs. M. Not disturb me ! not disturb me ! when I remember distinctly moving, about that time.

March. (*heard without*) Here, James, you rascal, come and take my gun !

Enter CAPTAIN HERBERT MARCHMONT, *singing*, R. U. E.; *places his gun against the house.*

Ah, Florence, darling, delighted to see you breathing the fresh air. (*taking her hand*)

Mrs. M. (*taking it away*) My dear, do not touch me with your cold hand, it sends a chill through me. You always forget.

March. I beg your pardon ; the forgetfulness was occasioned by the pleasure of seeing you.

Mrs. M. That is all very well ; you are getting a very careless boy—the idea of going out shooting when your wife was suffering !

March. My love, you were sleeping.

Mrs. M. As if that makes any difference ? You know I always suffer, even when I am sleeping—besides which, it is so unpleasant to be left to the care of menials. Sally, go and get my smelling-bottle.

Sally. Menials, indeed ! if I was only a man, oh, wouldn't I—wouldn't I—yes, that I would ! (*exit into house, L.*)

March. (*gathering a flower*) Here, Florence, 'is the sweetest smelling bottle, in the fresh, balmy morning air. (*taking out pipe*) And upon my life, I think *this* is the next.

Mrs. M. Herbert, how can you smoke that nasty pipe ?

March. Nasty ! why it's a beauty ! Look at the color of it, no end of trouble to bring it to this state of perfection. If anything happens to you, my pipe will be my only consolation. (*forgetting himself*)

Mrs. M. (*quickly*) What, would you forget me for that ?

March. No, dear ; it would make me think of you, as I watched the smoke ascending up to heaven, it would remind me of the way I knew your spirit had taken——

Mrs. M. (*sentimentally*) That is a very poetical idea, Herbert.

March. Very, I thought it was when I said it——

Mrs. M. Come and sit by me, I want to talk to you.

March. (*lolling on ground near her*) Proceed, my darling.

Mrs. M. I have heard there are some visitors at 'Oak Hall, I trust they are not any of your former friends, and they will not intrude upon our privacy.

March. I hope not, my dear. (*aside*) I only hope they may.

Mrs. M. They might lead you astray again, men are such terrible creatures, they are never to be trusted.

March. Not trusted! Diogenes in his water-butt never was such a nonpareil as I am; in fact, I intend packing myself up in a glass case, and sending myself to the next great National Exhibition, labelled "Greatest Sensation of the Age, A Tamed Husband." You, my dear, must sell the prescription to all married ladies in want of the knowledge, you will soon make a fortune by the speculation!

Mrs. M. How absurdly you talk. (*coughing*) Oh, that horrid pipe.

March. The last trait of the wild animal left, and you would destroy it. Let me smoke the calumet of peace.

Mrs. M. (*coughing*) It's choking me, Herbert! (*coughing*) Oh! It will kill me, I know it will. (*coughing*)

March. (*jumping up*) Is it, my dear? Sally, bring the smelling-bottle—don't choke, my love—my pipe is henceforth put out.

Mrs. M. (*recovering instantly*) Is it?—then I am better now.

Enter SALLY from house, with small phial.

Sally. You did not tell me which mam, so I have brought this. (*giving it*)

Mrs. M. (*taking it without observing, and smelling—coughs violently*) Oh, you horrid girl—you have brought me your master's tooth mixture.

Sally. (*aside and taking it*) I knew it was. (*aloud*) Lor mam, so it is; (*smelling it and making grimace*) it does smell nasty, I must confess. I beg pardon. (*aside*) Menial, indeed. I'll bring her the pepper-cruet next time. (*exit into house, L.*)

Mrs. M. That is all your fault, Herbert.

March. Yes, dear, no doubt about that.

Mrs. M. It's very wrong of you. Why do you have the tooth-ache?

March. Certainly not because I like it. I'll sell it a bargain to the lowest bidder.

Mrs. M. (*calling and crossing, L.*) Sally, Sally!

SALLY enters, HERBERT sits R.

Have you seen Zelinda?

Sally. No, mam.

Mrs. M. Call James.

Sally. James, James; here, missus wants you.

JAMES BANKS, enters L. U. E., a second cabbage in his hand.

Mrs. M. Where is my beautiful Zelinda, James?

Banks. She be a picking her bones, ma'am.

Mrs. M. You should not allow her to eat such food.

Banks. She rather seem'd to like it, and she never axed my leave.

Mrs. M. Go and bring her to me instantly.

Banks. No, mam, you'll excuse me, dogs is dangerous when they've got a bone ; besides, your father never brought I up to be nursemaid to a poodle. (exit into house, L.

Mrs. M. (*stamping her foot*) Go directly, and bring her Sally. (SALLY exit, L. U. E.) What an obstinate, vulgar, uncultivated creature James is.

March. Yes, dear ; I wonder you have not managed to tame him. Thank the Fates, I had nothing to do with his education.

Mrs. M. Little Marie Constance must go out in her new perambulator this morning, it will do her good.

March. I quite agree with you, let Sally give her a run.

Mrs. M. What Herbert, trust our child with that careless girl ! (*SALLY brings on dog, gives it to MRS. MARCHMONT, and exit into house again*) where are your feelings, you have not the feelings of a father—no, he hasn't—has he my pet ? (*caressing dog*)

March. The dog will agree with you, I dare say ; if Sally is not to take her out—who the deuce is to ? (*rising*)

Mrs. M. Who Herbert ? why, of course, you.

March. Me ! No, no, hang it ; I object to being made a nursemaid of—the idea of a Captain of Dragoons wheeling a perambulator !

Mrs. M. And why not ? it would be well if all Captains of Dragoons had as innocent, and harmless an employment to occupy their time.

March. That is a good out-look for the British army ! it would be keeping them under arms with a vengeance—why did you turn nurse away yesterday ?

Mrs. M. Because she was lazy, and you know how I dislike lazy people ; all she had to do was to attend to that darling child—and because the poor little sufferer is teething, and kept her awake for two or three nights, she positively got quite cross.

March. (*imitating her manner*) Did she indeed, what a barbarous creature—so unreasonable——

Mrs. M. Was it not, dear ? so you will take Marie Constance a little way, won't you ? (*caressingly*.)

March. No, no ; I cannot do that, I'm firm as granite.

Mrs. M. What, not when your wife asks you ?

March. No, I am marble, (*sitting R.*)

Mrs. M. (*patting his cheeks*) Not to please his poor little wife ?

March. No, I'm flint.

Mrs. M. (*kissing him*) Yes he will, I know he will, a naughty boy !

March. (*giving way*) I suppose I must. (*rising and aside*) Confound it, I am only pumice stone after all.

Mrs. M. There's a dear kind hubby, here take care of Zelinda (*putting the dog into his arms*) she must go with you to amuse baby—and, as you are so good I'll have baby's new pelisse put on that she may be a credit to her papa. (*Exit into house.*)

March. Do dear, I'm sure her precious papa will feel proud of her, and her new pelisse. A Dragoon under arms, a dog and a baby! I really am a donkey to submit to it. How some of my old friends would laugh, were they to see me—but she has such a deuced coaxing way with her; it is all very well talking—but no fellow knows how great a fool a pretty woman can make of him until he has been tried. Talk of the lords of creation, we are only knights of the petticoats after all! I certainly wish my wife would practice a little more of her winning manners on the servants.

Enter LIEUTENANT WORTHINGTON, and DR. BRUNT, R. U. E.

It is astonishing the number of changes in this house, Sally and James, they are the only fixtures—and the privilege of long service gives them more their own way than I get myself. (LIEUT. WORTHINGTON and DR. BRUNT have advanced R. and L.)

Worth. (*R. striking him on shoulder*) Ah, my gay old friend—how are you?

Brunt. (*L. striking him on shoulder*) Well, my dashing young spark, how d'ye do?

March. (*confused*) The devil! what is to be done now? (*aloud*) how are you both? I'm deuced glad to see you.

Brunt. You are? then put down that mongrel, and let us have a hearty shake of the hand.

Worth. To be sure, if amongst other wonders, you are not transformed from a Captain of Dragoons into a nurser of lapdogs.

March. Confound the animal! Here, Sally, Sally!

Enter SALLY, from house, L.

Sally. (*aside*) Good gracious! strange gentleman here, I do declare—it does a poor girl's eye-sight good.

March. Here take the dog. (*she does so, and exit, L.*) Now then, for a hearty shake of the hand—how did you find me out?

Worth. Perseverance seldom fails—once on the scent we ran you to cover.

Brunt. How is your wife, my boy?

Worth. Yes, how's your wife? we long to make her acquaintance; there is a party of us at Squire Beech's; we ran over to invite you both—feeling certain on our parts of a hearty welcome.

March. Of course, of course, old friends like you—(*aside*) I wish they were up to their necks in a horsepond, what the deuce will my wife say?

Worth. Where have you been hiding? and what made you turn Benedict?

March. I outran the constable, and was obliged to sell out—marriage was the only resource, for my old governor cut off the supplies. I met with my present wife, the daughter of a rich manufacturer in the neighborhood, proposed, was accepted, thrust my head into the noose, pulled the string—and here I am.

Brunt. And how is your wife? Second time of asking.

March. She is not very well.

Brunt. Got the measles, or the mumps? What is the matter?

March. I cannot exactly say.

Brunt. That is bad—I must have a look at her.

March. She suffers from the nerves.

Brunt. Nerves—oh, oh! she is a nervous patient—I thought so—you indulge her, and let her have her own way too much, that is the secret. Give her plenty to eat, but make her earn it first, that is a certain cure for the nerves. Introduce us.

March. Another time, my dear fellows—delighted to see you, but another time.

Worth. No time like the present.

March. The fact is, she is not at home.

Enter JAMES, quickly from house, L.

James. Missus says —

March. Confound you, get out!

James. I must deliver my message first, sir. Missus says she hopes you ain't let Zelinda go, for the baby be nearly ready for you to take it out for a airing. (**BRUNT and WORTHINGTON both laugh**) And missus says —

March. (*pushing him into house, L.*) Go to the devil!

Brunt. (*laughing*) So, so; "the baby be nearly ready."

Worth. (*laughing*) Do you feed it, my gallant captain, with the pap-spoon?

March. Hang it, don't laugh, it is a mistake of that dunder-headed fellow. I take the baby out! What an idea!

Brunt. A mistake is it? But there is no mistake about your reception being a very odd one after not meeting for so long a time.

March. To tell you the truth my wife is afraid of you fellows, she thinks you'll lead me astray.

Enter MRS. MARCHMONT from house, L., she stands listening.

Worth. Ha, ha, ha! lead you astray—the gayest fellow on town.

Brunt. The wildest rake—and a deuce of a favorite with the ladies! (*MRS. MARCHMONT screams, and is falling, MARCHMONT catches her*)

March. My wife—you have played the deuce with me—talking of the ladies, see what you have done—she is fainting.

Brunt. A little cold water thrown over the lady might revive her.

Mrs. M. (*instantly recovering*) Cold water, the barbarians! they would not only be the death of me, but they would spoil my dress. These are your old companions, are they? Gentlemen, your most obedient. (*very angrily—they bow*) For the future be good enough to recollect you are now talking to a husband and a father. Herbert, your friends will excuse you to attend to your family duties, come with me. (HERBERT *turns towards* WORTHINGTON) Herbert, come to the baby instantly. (MRS. MARCHMONT *exit indignantly into house, L.*)

March. You villains, you've done it!

Brunt. Done what?

March. Why, done me. (*aside*) She'll not let me go out for the next six months.

Brunt. Upon my life, we are exceedingly sorry at this malapropos introduction. Listeners never hear any good—it was her fault. So the late dashing dragoon has turned nursemaid, there is no denying that, now!

March. But I do most emphatically deny it. It is all very well for you fellows to stand grinning there; you are not domesticated as I am, you have no charming young wife, and a twelvemonth fledgling to look after. That's just her way, she knows the stern obstinacy of my disposition in all matters connubial, when we are alone, I mean, and, having had a tiff this morning, she takes advantage of the presence of others to make me look small. Why, Blue Beard himself never was half the Turk I am.

Mrs. M. (*calling*) Herbert!

March. Yes, my dear. Ha, ha! me carry the baby indeed!

Mrs. M. (*calling a little louder*) Do you hear me?

March. Yes darling! It is a devilish good joke—ha, ha!

Mrs. M. (*much louder*) Herbert, come instantly, sir!

March. Coming, my pet. (WORTHINGTON *and* BRUNT *laugh—* MARCHMONT *exit into house, L.*)

Brunt. That is where the joke comes in.

Worth. What a change!

Brunt. A change indeed, and an exceedingly awkward introduction. (WORTHINGTON *sits on seat, R.*, BRUNT *on chair, R. C.*)

Worth. You are right—I suppose we shall never be forgiven. I had no idea that a woman could make such a fool of a man. I'd see any female hanged—

Brunt. Do not complete the sentence, it is not gallant; besides, my boy, there is nothing new in it—we have all said the same thing, yet when the time comes you will be as great a donkey as the rest; for I do not believe there is a man living, with a heart in his bosom, who has not been made a fool of by a woman, at least once in his life.

Worth. Well, perhaps you are right—it cannot last long.

Brunt. I agree with you in that ; it cannot, especially with a fellow like Herbert. It is always dangerous interfering between man and wife ; but, in this case, we will venture a mild emetic at first—it will be far better than his receiving a dose in time ; that may wreck his future happiness and present love.

Worth. How is it to be administered ? She really is very pretty.

Brunt. Exactly, there is the danger. Your ugly ones sometimes are bad enough, but these pretty creatures, treat us lords of creation like so many teetotums. Herbert gives way to her as to a spoilt child. Let us try and shame him out of it. The rest of our party are not far off—we'll bring them here. (*both rise*)

Worth. You cannot do that—the etiquette of society—

Brunt. Etiquette of fiddle-de-dee ! Act first, and then apologise after—that is what I do, when I knock a man down for insulting me.

Worth. Allons, then—may the Fates be propitious !

Brunt. The Fates ? The physic, you mean.

(*exeunt, laughing, R. II. E.*)

Enter JAMES BANKS *from house, looking after them.*

Banks. (*imitating them*) Ha, ha, ha ! I shouldn't wonder if those chaps ain't a laughing at I, 'cos master made a flying gardener of me just now ; they're of the same imperant breed as that flunkey chap—I can see that with half a eye, and have come a conspirating down here. Let me catch 'em at any of their Lunnon tricks—I'll thump their heads.

Enter SALLY *from house.*

Sally. Pray whose head are you going to thump, James ?

Banks. Everybody's ! I tell 'ee what it is, Sally ; there's a dreadful conspiracy going on—it warn't for nothing else as my nose itched yesterday ; what do you think it betokened ?

Sally. That it wanted scratching, I should say. What is a conspiracy ?

Banks. (*confused*) Well, lass, a con-spi-racy is—is—don't'ee know that ? Thou'rt very ignorant, Sally. A con-spi-racy—I thought any fool knowed that a con-spi-racy is—is a conspiracy.

Sally. Thank you ; any woman could have given the same explanation ; but is it anything very dreadful ?

Banks. It's worse nor dreadful—it's awful. It's a gun-powder plot got up by a lot of fine folks, and a chap called Guy Fawkes—he wer an Irishman, and a dealer in lucifer matches.

Sally. What do they want to conspiracy master for ?

Banks. Why, they're conspiring against master and missus's happiness, just like that tiger chap is a doing against mine : and you

like it—you young asparagus, you know you do. If I catches him here again—(SMART *heard singing*, "*Meet me in the Willow Glen.*") I'll meet thee, lad—I'll meet thee—let me get at him!

Enter SMART, R. U. E., SALLY *holding* JAMES *back*.

Smart. Hilloa, my bold cultivator of greens and radishes, what's the row?

Banks. I'll let thee know, my Jack-a-dandy, if thee calls me names. (*is held back by SALLY*)

Smart. As a gentleman, I apologise—it's a way we have in the army.

Banks. Is it? Then it's a darned bad way! Are you a sharp-shooter?

Smart. I flatters myself I is—where the ladies are concerned. Few can withstand the 60-pounders I shoots from my heyes; I'm a regular *Armstrong* in that line. (*winking at SALLY*)

Banks. Are you? then just practise on another target or you'll find, I'm a regular *Armstrong* in this line. (*sparring.*)

Smart. A bruiser and a wit! I apologise. Don't excite yourself. Although a soldier, fighting is not in my line. I'm like my guv'nor—I belongs to the Guards, and prides myself on ornament, and not use.

Banks. You looks like one o' them; there's a main sight o' your sort, in the soldier line—what do you want here?

Smart. I have brought a note, to invite Captain Herbert Marchmont to the squire's, and to tell him, the whole party are following at my heels to fetch him. (*offering letter*)

Banks. I told you there's a gunpowder plot. I shouldn't wonder, if that letter ain't a young lucifer in disguise. (*SALLY is about to take it*) Don't 'ee touch it, lass, it'll go off I tell 'ee—I smell the brimstone; get out, yer young Guy Fawkes. (*threatening him; laughter heard without*)

Smart. It is all your fault, I am too late, here they come.

Enter DR. BRUNT *and* MRS. BRUNT, LIEUT. WORTHINGTON *and* MISS SMEATON, CAPTAIN *and* MRS. POPPET.

Mrs. B. What a delightful place—love in a cottage, without the cold mutton.

Brunt. With turnips of their own growing.

Banks. Here be a precious gang of them.

Clara. Well, it really is a very charming retreat!

Mrs. P. Delightful! just the place to pass one's honeymoon.

Poppet. Honey, nonsense! that is the only moon you women think of.

Mrs. B. And very proper too; for it is the most interesting one to us.

Worth. Well Smart, have you delivered the letter?

Smart. No Lieutenant, the servant here refuses to take it, and calls me "Guy Fawkes."

Worth. Confound the fellow, what does he mean?

Mrs. B. What an odd looking man—what is it—surely not a footman?

Smart. No, madam, it's a antedeluvian gardener!

Banks. What is that he calls me Sally, an ante what?

Sally. I don't know, something in the vegetable line.

Brunt. Where is your master?

March. (*heard without, L.*) Quite right, my dear, I will care.

Banks. Here he comes like a lamb to the slaughter.

Brunt. To your hiding places—if his wife is not with him, down upon him like an avalanche. (*they all retire, DR. BRUNT and MRS. B. R. 1 E. WORTHINGTON and CLARA L. 3 E. CAPTAIN and MRS. POPPET R. U. E. SMART behind angle of house. BANKS and SALLY L., leaning against each other in fear*)

Banks. Do you hear that Sally, they're going to avalanche him.

Sally. Oh catch me, James, I'm a going. (*HERBERT MARCHMONT enters laden with dog and toys, blowing child's trumpet, and wheeling perambulator, as he reaches C. all the characters advance, commencing with MR. and MRS. BRUNT; one after the other laughing heartily, finishing with SMART, who receives a blow from BANKS which sends him rolling on the stage. The drop quickly descends amidst general laughter.*)

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT II.

Scene. *An elegant drawing-room; fireplace R. 3 E.; door L.; French Windows, C. opening on lawn; chess table up stage, R.; writing materials on the table L. up stage; sofa R. and large ottoman L.; shawl discovered on chair.*

Enter JAMES BANKS, door L., dressed as a footman, looking and walking very awkwardly.

Banks. They have made a footman of me at last—shades of my 'orticultural hancestors, what would they say could they see me now! I am the fust of my race disgracing myself by wearing sich a uniform. I wouldn't have done it if it had not been for master, missus do worry him so. She be a rum un I must say, though we sprouted under the same roof.

Enter SALLY, *from door, L.*

Sally. (*laughing*) Ha, ha! Well, you do look a fright, I never thought you would have been so easily talked over; missus discharged Robert the other day, at a minute's warning—she should have been made to suffer.

Banks. Faithless Sally, what did I not suffer with that man? You knows what I catch'd you doing!

Sally. He *only* kissed me!

Banks. Only! and ain't that enough; don't you know it be a burglary for any man to steal a kiss from a woman, and she is guilty of manslaughter for allowing it?

Sally. Well James, it is very pleasant manslaughter—he said my lips were honey, and he'd like to taste it.

Banks. And to the comb he came and stole its sweetness—I see'd him do it.

Sally. The queen bee offered no objection.

Banks. But the king bee did, and stung him for his pains; I knock'd him down.

Sally. You did, and blackened his pretty eye.

Banks. I glories in it; he'll be ashamed to look at the girls for a month, I warrant me.

Enter SMART, R. C.

Smart. The governor at home? (*sees JAMES*) Ha, ha! here's a transmogrification—a pair of plush carnations out of cabbage stalks and high-lows.

Banks. You are about the sarsiest young chap as ever I came across. What do you want here again?

Smart. I want to see your master, after which I shall take my leave. (*sings*) "With a heart bowed down by weight of woe," &c.

Banks. Here my chirruper, here's a farthing, just move on to the next street.

Smart. The man who has not music in his soul—

Banks. Has oft times plenty o'brass in his pockets, lad.

Smart. The poetic soul can feed on air.

Banks. Can it? I prefers beans and bacon, an' plenty on 'em.

Smart. Love is poetry, and what is poetry without love? (*sighing and looking at SALLY*).

Sally. Oh dear, I wish he wouldn't. (*aside*)

Banks. Poetry ain't fattening, and neither life nor love ain't much without brass now-a-days.

March. (*without*) Yes, my dear, very well.

Banks. Here comes master, come along Sally.

Smart. "Fare-thee-well, and if for ever," &c. (*sings operatically; SALLY and SMART embrace as JAMES turns up stage, he separates them, at length JAMES pushes SALLY out, exclaiming—*

Banks. No thee, don't. I'll be hanged for woman slaughter one o' these days—thou shameless cockatrice, get out with thee.

(*exeunt C.*)

Enter MARCHMONT, L.

March. Well Smart how is your master?

Smart. (*saluting à la militaire*) I can confidently assert, sir, his health at the present moment, is tip top; here is a letter, sir.

March. (*reading it aside*) An invitation to Squire Beech's this evening—an apology for the denouement of yesterday, and a positive threat, unless I follow the letter in half an hour, to storm my fortress again. What the deuce shall I do, the Doctor and Worthington are not to be trifled with; at any rate I must put them off until I have seen my wife. (*writes*) Here Smart, give this note to your master.

Smart. Yes, sir. I'll present arms in five minutes.

(*salutes and exit L. C.*)

MRS. MARCHMONT enters at same time, door L.

Mrs. M. Herbert, dear, who is that—a messenger from the people at the hall?

March. (*going to her and leading to sofa, R.*) Yes my love.

Mrs. M. I thought so. I knew they wanted to ruin your domestic habits, and lead you astray, after all the trouble I have had; cover up my feet, dear.

March. Yes, my darling. (*gets shawl and inadvertently covers face, speaking aside at same time*) How shall I break it to her?

Mrs. M. Herbert, Herbert! you are smothering me.

March. A thousand pardons—I was thinking—

Mrs. M. Not of me, that is very certain. I really was very angry, at the dreadful fright those wicked people gave me and baby yesterday; my nerves have hardly recovered from the shock yet. (*he is sitting R.*) Herbert place a chair at my side, to hold my smelling-bottle and fan.

March. (*doing so, and aside*) Telling her is quite as bad as plunging into a cold bath.

Mrs. M. Oh, Herbert, dear, you have not half covered up your wife's tootseys.

March. (*covering them again, aside*) I emphatically say bother her tootseys. (*returning to ottoman L.*)

Mrs. M. Why do you go over there? Come and sit at my side.

March. (*doing so*) I must break it somehow.

Mrs. M. (*giving a slight scream*) My fan! my beautiful fan! and my smelling-bottle! You clumsy boy, why don't you take care?

March. Oh, bother!

Mrs. M. Oh, he is swearing, how dreadful! And calls his wife a bother!

March. No, no, dear, I meant I was a bother—you were a bother—I mean I'm bothered altogether—(*slight pause*) I have not breathed the fresh air for an age.

Mrs. M. What a fib! do you not go out shooting, and disturbing your wife at eight o'clock in the morning?

March. I mean the fresh night air of the morning,—no, no, I mean morning air of the night—the evening, you know. (*she looks at him, and he, confused, turns away.*)

Mrs. M. It is not proper a married man should, my love—married men should give up going out after dusk, except on special occasions. I could not endure the evening unless you stayed at home to read to me—besides, the night air would bring on your toothache again.

March. No, dear, it would not; I filled the cavity with gutta percha yesterday—it is marvellous the good it has done me. Suppose I go out for a little while this evening?

Mrs. M. I understand—you had better apply to the Divorce Court at once—you have grown tired of me—go, go—leave me, in my weak state, to the care of menials—

March. (*rising*) Confound it!

Mrs. M. You did swear that time—it really is too dreadful! (*crying hysterically*)

March. I did not mean it, I assure you I did not; there, let me have a kiss, and we'll make it up.

Mrs. M. No, Herbert, no—you shall never kiss me again. (*resisting*)

March. Don't cry like that, my darling; there, there, I will stay at home.

Mrs. M. (*instantly ceasing, and looking at him, smiling*) Then you may kiss me, dear.

March. (*aside*) It is no use—I give it up, booked again. When I married there was no mistake about my being taken in and done for.

Mrs. M. It is very little sacrifice I ever ask of you—I thought you could not deny me, for few wives are so unselfish as I am.

March. Eh! (*turning with surprise*) Yes, exactly. (*recollecting himself*) You are quite right, dear, *very* few. (*aside*) I hope I may be forgiven. (*aloud*) I must now be candid with you. I never have objected to receive any of your particular circle of friends in my house, I must now ask you to return the compliment. Whatever these people are in your estimation, I once belonged to their set—they were, and are my friends; they have resolved to pay me a visit if I am not on the road in half-an-hour; the time has nearly expired, and nothing is left but for you to receive them like a kind, good little wife!

Mrs. M. It is very provoking.

March. It is, dear—I am burning with indignation at their coming.

Mrs. M. Are you? you do not look like it, Herbert!

March. No, but I am, inwardly—inwardly, I am burning.

Mrs. M. Well, they may come this once.

March. There is a darling.

Mrs. M. And now take me for a walk across the garden, it may give me an appetite. (*putting shawl on her shoulders*)

March. Certainly, I hope it may. Did 'em consent to my having a few friends?

Mrs. M. Yes, but don't 'em be a naughty boy, &c., &c.

(*exeunt R. C.*)

Enter JAMES BANKS, L. D.

Banks. Here, Sally, Sally! drat the wench, where is she! Here are all the conspirators in a drove in the hall. Sally!

Enter SALLY, L. C.

Sally. Is the house on fire, James?

Banks. No; but where be master and mistress?

Sally. They are wheedling each other in the garden. Master, I suppose, for once, has got his own way, and it's such a novelty he is a little beside himself.

Banks. Here they are, Guy Fawkes and all—here'll be fine doings. The most rakishish lot of folks I ever see'd. Let us go and fetch poor master and missus, like lambs to the slaughter.

(*exeunt, R. C.*)

Enter, L. D., LIEUTENANT WORTHINGTON and MISS CLARA SMEATON, *who pass over*, R., DR. and MRS. BRUNT, CAPTAIN and MRS. POPPET.

Brunt. Singular kind of servant that, directing us to enter this room. Where the deuce is he?

Mrs. P. Really, a very charming retreat—just the kind of place that I and Poppet intend to—

Poppet. Nothing of the sort, I never “intend to” again—it is quite enough to make a fool of one's self once in a life-time. Ah! yes, indeed! Humbug!

Mrs. P. My dear, do let me finish a sentence.

Poppet. No right to begin one, your periods are too long. Women never understand the full stop. No, indeed, bah!

Brunt. Come, come, cease sharpshooting, or I shall have four patients instead of two, that will never do. (*all sit—MRS. and DR. BRUNT, L., CAPTAIN and MRS. POPPET at chess table, LIEUTENANT WORTHINGTON and MISS SMEATON, R.*)

Mrs. B. I should think not, indeed. This really appears to be a desperate case, and if my dear old boy effects a cure, we will institute a new degree, P. E. M. F., "Physician Extraordinary to Matrimonial Fledglings," and he shall be the first professor.

Brunt. Ha, ha, ha! Really a great creature, my wife!

Worth. She is a pattern for the age.

Mrs. B. You are right, and a tolerably large one. You have not to look twice to see me.

Worth. Doctor, it is about three o'clock, I hear Marchmont dines early, we may as well stay if he asks us—Miss Clara here is dying with hunger.

Clara. What a fib! I declare I never spoke.

Brunt. The lieutenant does not want you to speak—he reads your eyes.

Poppet. Does he? Then, without being personal, he reads a three volume sensational romance at a glance—passion, sentiment, vanity, flirtation, jealousy, love and folly, all lying within the depths of a woman's eyes.

Brunt. Right, Poppet, there is some truth in what you say. Euclid hath no problem half so difficult.

Mrs. B. Of course you men will agree. As for the captain, suppose, dears, as he flatters himself he is so very learned in our sex, we enrol an Amazonian Volunteer Corps, like the King of Dahomey, and he shall command us.

Poppet. I would sooner command a brigade of Sandwich Islanders—the only consolation certainly would be, women might the more easily be got rid of. Ah, yes—bah!

Mrs. B. How so pray?

Poppet. Why, I'd encamp you on the Desert of Sahara, in total seclusion from the masculine gender. You would fall out in a day, revolt in a week, and exterminate each other in less than a month.

Mrs. B. Mrs. Poppet, you punish him when you get him home, tease him for the next week, and run up an enormous milliner's bill—that is my revenge, is it not, dear.

Brunt. It is, and well I know it.

Mrs. B. I would soon teach him his duty.

Poppet. Teach an old soldier his duty? Ah, no—bah!

Mrs. B. Yes, and make a greater fool of him than a young soldier. Now don't look grim—I can stand your fire, captain, and return it with interest.

Poppet. You are right, madam—you can stand a volley—your magazine never lacks powder and shot.

Mrs. B. No, and never will, captain, until it ceases for ever; then you can assist at a *feu de joie* over my grave.

Brunt. My wife is getting on too grave a subject. (*looking off, R.*) Here are our friends. (*all rise and get towards R., MRS. BRUNT up stage*)

Enter HERBERT and MRS. MARCHMONT, C.

March. My dear friends, how do you do? I am delighted to see you. One moment until I have taken my wife to a seat—I shall then have the pleasure of introducing you. (MRS. MARCHMONT sits on ottoman, L.) Dr. Brunt, Captain and Mrs. Poppet.

Brunt. I am glad to see you, madam. Allow me to offer an apology for the freedom I was guilty of yesterday; also for storming your house in this way, but we are very old friends of your husband's and in the country we don't stand upon much ceremony. (*retires*)

March. Mr. Worthington, and Miss Clara Smeaton.

Worth. I am equally bound to offer my apologies, and to express the pleasure I feel at this introduction.

Brunt. Here is my wife, Herbert, as saucy as ever. (MRS. BRUNT advances)

March. Ah, Mrs. Brunt, how do you do? This is a pleasure indeed. (*shaking hands heartily*)

Mrs. M. (*after coughing several times*) Herbert, Herbert!

March. (*recollecting himself*) I beg your pardon, my dear. My wife, Mrs. Brunt. (*stands at her side.*)

Mrs. B. Delighted to see you, madam; and, as for you, my gay captain, you know I always liked you. (*bringing him C.*) My old boy used to be jealous, for upon my life a little flirtation with you occasionally, was very refreshing. No fear now, eh?

Mrs. M. (*sitting up with surprise*) My dear, you *never* told me of this before.

March. (*confused*) Eh—no—exactly—yes, my love, it is just one of those little matters which husbands frequently forget to tell their wives. (*aside to MRS. BRUNT*) Let us drop the subject.

Mrs. B. Or Mrs. Marchmont will drop you, eh? I understand—a little of the green eyed monster.

Mrs. M. Herbert, you forget yourself. (*he retires*) Ladies and gentlemen, you will excuse my rising. I am pleased to welcome my husband's old friends—pray be seated.

Poppet. I will make an attack on the chess table again if you will allow me.

March. Certainly.

Poppet. Mrs. Poppet, right about face—quick march! (*they sit at table*)

Mrs. B. And so, my dear Mrs. Marchmont, you are not very well?

Mrs. M. No, I suffer terribly. I always feel so very *ennuied*.

Mrs. B. Poor creature! Doctor, what do you prescribe?

Brunt. I must study the patient's case. Any pain, madam? (*sitting on chair, L. of MRS. MARCHMONT.*)

Mrs. M. Oh, dear! yes, very much.

Brunt. Ah, that is very bad indeed—where?

Mrs. M. Everywhere. (*indignantly*.)

Brunt. That is worse—a cough, madam?

Mrs. M. Oh, distressing, (*coughing*) particularly at night.

Brunt. There certainly is a grave tone about that cough—palpitation of the heart?

Mrs. M. Every morning.

Brunt. Sickness?

Mrs. M. Every afternoon.

Brunt. Headache?

Mrs. M. Always. (*louder than before*)

Poppet. (*playing*) Humbug! (*all start round*) I beg pardon—my wife was making a noodle of herself. (*they dispute about a move*)

Brunt. I say, Poppet, be good enough not to interrupt with your expletives again, they are rather awkward. (*to MRS. MARCHMONT*) Then it seems, madam, each particular part of the day has its particular suffering? Very distressing.

Ladies. Very distressing.

Poppet. Oh, gammon! (*all turn*) Beg pardon—it is Mrs. Poppet again. Why don't you, madam, look after your pawn?

March. I wish you would be quiet, Poppet, and go on with your game. You are staying at Squire Beech's? I suppose you have a merry time of it, Mrs. Brunt?

Mrs. B. Merry? I should think so. Up at six o'clock hay making, breakfast at eight, a gallop after, luncheon at two, and plenty of it, archery, reading or love making to follow, dinner at six, dessert after, cards and dancing, billiards or backgammon, coffee, supper at twelve, cigars and pipes and a little brandy and water to send us comfortably to bed.

Mrs. M. (*in amazement*) Good gracious! Cigars and pipes—what, the ladies!

Mrs. B. No, of course not—the gentlemen, my dear; we leave the monsters to it. I do not aspire to Manillas, or cigarettes yet; but my old boy here, he smokes like a furnace.

Mrs. M. (*aside*) What dreadful creatures to trust my innocent darling with.

March. Will you honour us by staying to dinner?

Mrs. B. To be sure we will. You will pardon my saying it, as we are very old friends—but we came on purpose.

Brunt. You hear, Herbert, my wife is a great creature.

Mrs. B. You mean a hungry creature—that I certainly am.

Enter JAMES BANKS, L. D.

Banks. Beg pardon, but cook wants to know if the dinner is to be spoilt—it be precious near it, I can tell 'ee, sir.

March. (*rising*) Certainly not. James, you are a great deal more useful than polite. What do you say, Florence—shall we go?

(exit JAMES.)

Mrs. M. Yes, but your friends will please to make some allowance at our being unprepared for their reception. (*all rise except MR. and MRS. POPPET*) The ladies can unrobe in the ante-room. (*HERBERT is just offering his arm to MRS. BRUNT*) Herbert, my love, your arm.

March. Certainly. (*to MRS. BRUNT*) Excuse me—I know it is not the fashion for a fellow to look after his own wife, and on this occasion——

Mrs. B. You cannot even follow the fashion, and look after somebody else's.

March. Have a little mercy.

Mrs. B. Who ever heard of a woman having mercy, where one of her own sex is the obstacle? You ought to know our nature better——

March. Well then, for my sake!

Mrs. B. Ah, that is more likely; our weakness lies in that direction.

Mrs. M. Herbert, when you have quite done talking I ask for your arm——

Mrs. B. Hark to the bugle call!

March. No, 'tis the réveille. It wakes me to my duty.

Mrs. B. Now, doctor, give me your arm——

Brunt. Certainly, my dear, on we march to——

Mrs. B. Glory——

March. No, not glory, it is boiled mutton and capers.

(*exit with MRS. MARCHMONT, L.*)

Brunt. Come, Poppet. The castle is in danger, knock it down with your queen; Mrs. P. the knights are hungry. As for our young friends there, they can live upon love—I never did see such billers and coopers.

(*exit with MRS. BRUNT, laughing, L.*)

Mrs. P. Ah, Poppet, just as we were, when we loved, like——

Poppet. (*both advancing*) Fools! bah, humbug! left face Mrs. P., dinner's ready, mutton and capers—very good—charge! (*takes long quick strides and partially drags her off L.* MRS. P. *running with short steps*)

Worth. Upon my life, they are a very odd couple—what an example for us, Clara; does it not frighten you?

Clara. Not in the least. Although I am young, I have a will of my own, and intend to assert it if necessary; when women are weak, husbands get foolish and forget themselves——

(*walking up and down together*)

Worth. Bravo! you ladies are all fond of building castles of prerogative before marriage——

Clara. I suppose, you think, only to lose them after—in my case that has to be proved. But I sincerely hope we shall cause no misunderstanding between Captain Marchmont and his wife.

Worth. Oh, never fear—besides, if bitter now, they will enjoy the sweets better afterwards—It is human nature.

Clara. Then according to that maxim, our bitters are to follow the sweets.

Worth. That does not hold; but we are forgetting dinner, let us put off the argument of that subject until we are wandering together in the moonlight, it lends enchantment to it. I shall be wanted to aid the plot against Marchmont.

Clara. What is it? Oh, do tell me!

Worth. In talking over old times, Marchmont is sure to get excited, the doctor is a capital one to encourage passing the bottle, and we think he has been kept so strictly since his marriage, he will be easily a little overcome.

Clara. Oh, how dreadful!

Worth. Very dreadful! but the doctor says it is necessary to effect a cure.

Enter JAMES BANKS, L.

Banks. I say come on, if thee wants any dinner you'd better be quick, or thou wilt get nought.

Worth. In that case, let us go.

Clara. I am not hungry, but allons—

Worth. Young ladies never are, it is left for vulgar folks to have an appetite. (exeunt L.)

Banks. Ecod, is it? then there be a jolly lot o' vulgar folks in t' world, and I'm about the vulgarestest of 'em all, 'cos I've always got one. That old Doctor, and Mrs. Doctor, them's amongst the vulgar ones too, for I left them a pitching into the mutton as if life was short, and they'd make the most on it.

Enter SALLY, L.

Sally. James, master wants you—you should not have left the table, come back directly.

Banks. Not I, 'ecod—they must wait on themselves. There's that sarcy tiger, let him do it, I ain't going to demean myself any longer afore him. Master sends me here to look after the young 'uns and now they mun all look after themselves.

Sally. It's quite certain James, you will never make a footman.

Banks. I should na' like to—I've a soul above plush—(bell)

Sally. There is the bell.

Banks. I hears it. (sitting)

Sally. Why don't you go? (bell)

Banks. No, no, that Lunnon chap mun finish the job now.

Enter SMART, L.

Smart. I say cauliflower, I'm doing all your work for you.

Banks. Be you lad? I'm happy to hear it—thou can go on an' finish it. (*lying on sofa, R.*)

Smart. Well you're a lazy 'un I must say. (*sitting on ottoman*)

Banks. An' you're a sharp 'un I will say, but you ain't a going to bounce me I can tell 'ee, though you do come from Lunnon. (*bell*)

Sally. There is the bell again.

Banks. If you only let's 'em ring three or four times more, they're sure to wait on themselves, and it saves a deal of trouble. (*putting legs on chair*)

Smart. I don't go any more.

Banks. No doan't lad, I will ner I know. (*bell*)

Sally. Drat you, I must go myself, but I'll tell master.

Banks. Do lass, tell him o' this sarcy chap a seating himself in the best chairs. (*SALLY exit L.*)

Smart. (*SMART and JAMES look very disgusted at each other*) Ain't you ashamed to let a lady do your duty?

Banks. Not a bit if she likes to do it lad, she be quite welcome, or anybody else; I can do nought and do it well.

Enter MRS. BRUNT, MRS. POPPET, MISS CLARA, and MRS. MARCHMONT, L.

Mrs. B. The servants are taking it easy at any rate,

Mrs. M. How dare you seat yourselves here. (*BANKS and SMART jump up*) James your master has been ringing for you; go and assist Sally directly. Leave the room both of you. (*they cross, all the ladies seat themselves*)

Banks. I'm going, missus.

Smart. So ham I. (*strutting out L. D.*)

Banks. (*pulling him back*) After me, gardeners afore flunkeys. (*exit L.*)

Smart. (*aside*) What, insult a hosifer! it's lucky he's beneath my notice, or I'd call him out! (*exit L.*)

Mrs. B. (*L. C.*) That is a very strange servant of yours, Mrs. Marchmont.

Mrs. M. (*L.*) He has been in our family since he was a boy, and his father also—he therefore deems himself privileged to take strange liberties sometimes; having lost our footman he is serving until we are again suited—and holding the office of gardener, I suppose it hurts his dignity.

Mrs. B. Servants are a great bother, you must find it very awkward.

Mrs. M. Oh, dreadful! would you believe it, the other day I had to open the front door myself.

Mrs. P. (*R. C.*) Dear me! I wonder, my love, you did not make up your mind to faint directly.

Mrs. M. I did think about it, but there was no one there to catch me.

Mrs. B. And how did you recover from the shock?

Mrs. M. I really don't know, for it was actually a beggar — All. Good gracious!

Mrs. P. Was it a man?

Mrs. M. Yes, dear, a full grown one—and men are such horrid creatures.

Mrs. B. So they are, yet I should like to know what we poor women would do without them—depend upon it, with those ladies who run down the male sex—grapes are sour.

Clara. (R.) Yet it does not do to let them know we think highly of them.

Mrs. P. My dear Miss Clara, recollect, if you please, we are married ladies, and speak from experience; you are not yet entitled to give an opinion.

Mrs. B. Nonsense, Clara is a sensible girl, men are conceited enough in all conscience.

Mrs. P. }
and } (together) In that we perfectly agree my dear.
Mrs. M. }

Mrs. B. Especially where ladies are concerned. Now you, Mrs. Marchmont, have a husband any woman might feel proud of.

Mrs. M. Yes, he is very well now, but I have had a deal of trouble with him; he was inclined to be very wild—

Mrs. B. I have known him for some years, and do not believe he was worse than other young men, and not half so bad as many. I would not give a rush for the best man that ever walked, if he had not a little life in him. I hate your milk sops, they are mostly either fools or rogues.

Mrs. M. I do hope, madam, you will not corrupt my Herbert, with your doctrines.

Mrs. B. You think him cured?

Mrs. M. Think! I'm sure of it.

Mrs. B. Never a leetle late at nights?

Mrs. M. Never, he never has the latch key.

Mrs. P. Never a little bit cross?

Mrs. M. Never; I never allow him to be.

Mrs. B. Never a leetle too much wine?

Mrs. M. My dear, madam, he never *touches* above two glasses. (HERBERT heard singing "*Here's a health to the ladies, God bless them!*" &c., the ladies rise except MRS. MARCHMONT)

Clara. The gentlemen are merry.

Mrs. B. Who was that singing, I do believe it was your husband.

Mrs. M. Impossible, he never sings. (HERBERT sings again)

Mrs. B. That was his voice.

Mrs. M. I believe, Mrs. Brunt, it is my privilege to know best. Herbert's voice is—

Mrs. B. A little more liquid than usual that is all ; they are coming this way.

Enter HERBERT MARCHMONT, *half intoxicated*, with DR. BRUNT, LIEUT. WORTHINGTON, and CAPTAIN POPPET, L.

March. (R. C.) That's capital, delightful. Ha, ha ! (*laughing, but seeing his wife, stops quickly*) The ladies, I have no hesitation in saying—bless 'em !

Mrs. M. What is the matter Herbert? how strange you look !

March. It's nothing dear, a touch of the toothache—that's all, my love.

Brunt. (L.) Well, ladies, I suppose you have been talking scandal.

Clara. (R.) And what have you been talking ?

Poppet. (R. C.) Politics, my dear, the state of the nation.

March. Which accounts for our present state of elevation.

Mrs. M. (*anxiously*) Are you ill Herbert ?

March. Very, dear, I've a sad complaint, we must have that bow window altered, I have been sitting near it, and the sun has been too strong for my delicate constitution.

Brunt. Herbert is quite right, it is an attack of alcholicania ; I prescribe some good old port, administered in infinitesimal doses.

March. That's it, alco-hol-oh-hol—exactly, you know, only large doses doctor. James, James.

Enter JAMES BANKS, L.

A bottle of port wine.

Mrs. M. Oh, James, your master is so excited, and so ill.

Banks. Is he missus? (*aside*) By gum ! I'd only like to have half his complaint. (exit, L.)

Mrs. M. (*suspiciously*) Herbert, you are not yourself.

March. No dear, I'm somebody else, it's the winestroke—I mean sunstroke—the ladies, bless 'em !

Mrs. M. Oh, misery ! I see it all, he is intoxicated. (*crying and sinking into chair*)

March. No dear, it's the doctor, he is intoxicated—bring the remedy—another bottle of wine.

Mrs. M. (*starting up*) You shall not have a drop, sir.

March. Am I the master of my own house? Are you a lord of the creation, or am I a lord of the creation I should like to know? I'll have a dozen bottles (MRS. M. *screams*) a thousand bottles, (*she screams*) a million, billion, trillion bottles. (*louder*) We'll have a jolly night.

Enter JAMES BANKS, L., *with bottle on tray*.

Mrs. M. James, put your master to bed.

March. If he does (*seizes bottle*) I'll blow his brains out! (*general confusion*)

Banks. (L.) Keep him off, keep him off, I'm murdered!

Brunt. (L. C.) I'm astonished!

Mrs. B. (L. C.) I'm delighted!

Mrs. M. I'm dying! (*fainting in a chair, L.*)

March. (C.) I'm drunk! (*picture*)

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

Same scene. Fire alight.

Enter from R. C. JAMES BANKS, LIEUT. WORTHINGTON, DR. BRUNT and MRS. BRUNT.

Mrs. B. (C.) A fire such weather as this?

Banks. (L.) Missus will have it, she be a chilly mortal!

Brunt. (L. C.) So your master has been doing penance for the last week, I hear?

Banks. I don't know, sir, aught about that; but he has been dandling after missus worse nor ever—she would not let him go out this morning, then he got in a bit of a passion, an' I heer'd him say to hisself, he shouldn't stand it much longer.

Mrs. B. Oh, you heard him say that, James?

Banks. Yes marm, with my own ears, and nobody else's.

Worth. That is good news, doctor.

Brunt. Yes, that sounds well—our scheme will succeed, or I'm very much mistaken.

Enter SALLY, L. D.

Sally. James, mistress has sent me (*seeing company*) Oh, I beg pardon—

Brunt. Not at all, you may be of use to us, you are both old servants, I believe?

Sally. Yes, sir, we are both old servants—I have been in missus's family almost ever since I was born.

Banks. An' so have I, long afore then.

Brunt. There is little fear of your being discharged.

Mrs. B. (*seated*) Recollect, we do not wish to inspire any feelings of disrespect towards either your master or mistress. We are

obliged to ask for your aid, and trust to your good sense not to take advantage.

Banks. (*aside*) I say, Sally, they be enlisting us in their gunpowder plot. (*aloud*) What do you want us to do? None of your Lunnon tricks, thou know'st.

Brunt. No, no; the facts are simply these: we think it probable, by pursuing the present ill-advised course, your mistress may destroy her own happiness, and that of your master; for both of whom we have very great respect. What we require you to do is this, at a certain time—probably to-day, if I can arrange to bring your master to the same mind—you must both be taken ill, and the cook, she must be ill.

James. What—we be all on us to be ill!

Mrs. B. All!

Banks. All! Are you going to give us any o' your physic to make us so?

Brunt. Certainly not—you must be ill and do nothing.

Banks. Aye, by gum! that's just the sort o' illness I likes.

Sally. Yes, and so do I.

Banks. We prides ourselves there ain't a young man, or young woman in these parts as can do nought, and do it better nor we can.

Brunt. Very well, you will receive further instructions from me, after I have seen your master. Mind what I have said, and you shall receive five pounds each.

(*WORTHINGTON is seated R., MRS. BRUNT, R. C.*)

Banks. (*aside*) Five pounds! A fortune, for us, wench; we'll get wed.

Sally. So we will, we'll live independent, and keep a public house.

Banks. That will be grand—you shall sarve the customers, an' I'll drink the beer. Come along, let us go and do nought.

Sally. Yes, we'll make haste about it. (*exeunt L. D.*)

Worth. Doctor, is it not rather singular that a girl, the daughter of a manufacturer, should become so spoilt, by apeing the worst follies of her more patrician brother and sisterhood?

Brunt. (*seated on ottoman*) My dear boy, you are a young fellow, associating much with the world, and ought to have learnt, 'ere this, we are all too liable to copy the vices—and not the virtues, of our betters.

Worth. True enough—but how could Herbert's wife become so initiated?

Brunt. Through the foolish pride of her parents, I suppose; who, born and educated in humble life, sought to atone for their ignorance, in the ill-directed education of their daughter—like many other girls, she was sent up to London, introduced into a fashionable circle by those who, rich in blood, but poor in pocket, fawned upon her father's wealth—read fashionable novels, married a

fashionable man, and had never troubled herself to examine beneath the surface of all this. By indulgencies from her childhood, her every desire has been a seeming divine law and like so many true young hearts, an otherwise sensible mind has been thus prostrated, and the true soul of womanhood crushed within a narrow cycle of prettiness, selfishness, and vanity.

Mrs. B. Pluto risen from the grave, as sure as I am a woman!

Enter HERBERT MARCHMONT, L. D.

March. I am very glad to see you again. I have invited you, but really I dread to think what my wife will say when she sees you.

Brunt. (*both sit on ottoman*) Excuse me, but I say bother your wife.

March. My dear fellow she really bothers me. Ever since that little escapade I have had to eat humble pie. Look at my waistcoat—I do believe I am getting thinner every day.

Mrs. B. No wonder—the pie is indigestible, don't swallow any more.

Brunt. Have a pie of your own, with a good hard crust, and see how she likes it.

March. Come, this is too bad—you would make me turn conspirator.

Mrs. B. We would make a man of you again. When are you coming to Oak Hall?

March. I cannot tell; I fear my wife will not let me visit you at all.

Mrs. B. (*mockingly*) Won't she let her little boy out for a walk—a pretty little dear?

March. Hang it—it's cruel to laugh at a poor wretch like that. If I kick over the traces, she stops the supplies, and that is very awkward; besides which, although somewhat of a little tyrant, I really am very fond of her.

Mrs. B. That's the worst of it. Now let us come to the point. This wife-ruling will not do, although a strong-minded female, I object to it. In two years you will be off, like a colt in a hay-field. Make a dash now—the affair of the other day will be of service to you if it is followed up. You must have an attack of *ennui*, your nerves must be shattered—in truth, the nerves of the entire household must give way. Let everybody have a lazy fit, shame your wife into a little exertion. She will kill herself with doing nothing if you do not.

March. Kill herself!

Brunt. Yes, kill herself. How the deuce do you expect any young woman, with nothing on earth the matter with her but laziness, can exist without exercise?

March. But then, doctor her nerves?

Brunt. Her fiddlesticks! A woman's nerves are as strong as a man's, and often stronger. Exercise is what one half my lady patients want. If they insist on pills, I give them bread: if draughts, coloured water: it serves the imagination, and does no harm. Why, two-thirds of us doctors would starve on positive disease, whereas we fatten on whims. (*all rise*)

Mrs. B. I had not been married a week before I found that out.

March. In truth I am a little sick of it. Convince me of the efficacy of your remedy, and consider me in the leading strings—

Worth. I hear a footstep coming this way—it may be your wife.

Brunt. Come along—we will soon convince you.

Mrs. B. The enemy has surrendered—we'll take him prisoner. (*they lay hold of his arms*) Now left about face—(*they do so*) quick march! (*exeunt, L. C.*)

Enter MRS. MARCHMONT *and* SALLY, L., *the latter carrying fan, scent bottle, shawl, and plenty of books.*

Mrs. M. Lead me to the sofa, Sally.

Sally. Yes, mum—wait until I put down the books. (*aside*) She loads me like an elephant. (*drops some of the books*)

Mrs. M. (*starting*) Oh, you stupid girl! you will kill me by such sudden shocks. You lazy creature, cannot you carry a few books without upsetting them?

Sally. A few! (*aside*) A circulating library!

Mrs. M. (*walking slowly to couch, R.*) Look me out a pretty novel, Sally.

Sally. Here is one "The Hen-pecked Husband." (*spitefully, aside*) That ought to suit her.

Mrs. M. Yes, that will do. Where is your master? (*taking book*)

Sally. I don't know, mum.

Mrs. M. He has surely not gone out. My eyes are so weak—he must come and read to me. Sally!

Sally. (*going each time, and returning*) Yes, mum?

Mrs. M. Fetch Zelinda to me.

Sally. Yes, mum.

Mrs. M. Sally, tell the cook to serve up dinner as soon as possible—I am very hungry.

Sally. Yes, mum.

Mrs. M. Oh, Sally, (*she returns*) never mind—that will do.

Sally. (*aside*) A pity she could not think of something else.

(*exit, L.*)

Mrs. M. That stupid girl is sure to make some mistake. She is dreadfully lazy—I hate lazy people—how they can be so I am sure is a mystery to me. It is very sad to be overcome with *ennui* as I am. I must be very ill, for neither the doctor nor can I discover what is the matter.

Enter HERBERT MARCHMONT, D. L., *very pale, holding handkerchief to head &c., lies on ottoman, L.*

Mrs. M. (*hearing him, but not looking*) Is that you, dear? I wish you would fetch Zelinda to me, there is a good boy. (MARCHMONT *groans*) Good gracious, Herbert! do not make that noise. (*repeated*) Herbert, dear, you quite disturb me. (*seeing him*) What is the matter my dear? Are you ill?

March. Yes, dear, it is my turn now. I have got it this time.

Mrs. M. Got it—got what?

March. I don't know, it's very bad.

Mrs. M. Is it in your head?

March. My nerves are prostrated from inactivity—it's the tic doloureux.

Mrs. M. Is it inactivity dear? Poor fellow, you shall go out.

March. Thank you, dear—when? (*half rising*)

Mrs. M. Now, with baby and the perambulator.

March. (*relapsing*) Oh, oh, oh! My legs, my legs!

Mrs. M. What a distressing noise! Has it attacked your legs?

March. Yes, it is in my legs now.

Mrs. M. But this is very sudden.

March. Very; it came on all at once.

Mrs. M. But we must not both be ill at the same time, or what am I to do?

March. Do for yourself, darling; that is what I recommend.

Mrs. M. You know I cannot, in my weak state. I'll ring for James. (*does so*)

Enter JAMES BANKS, L. D., *head tied up, night-cap, pale, groaning, &c.*

Mrs. M. James, what on earth is the matter with you.

Banks. I don't know, missus, but I be very bad. (*both groan*)

Mrs. M. You will kill me if you make that noise. James, cover up my feet.

Banks. Yes, missus. (*he does so with shawl*)

March. James, cover up my feet.

Banks. Yes, sir. (*does so*) Oh, my head, my head!

Mrs. M. Is it the toothache?

Banks. No, missus, worse nor that.

Mrs. M. The tic doloureux?

Banks. Yes, missus, it be the tic tooralloo summat or the other.

Mrs. M. In your head?

Banks. Noa, in my legs, missus.

Mrs. M. Then what have you tied up your head for?

Banks. It might come there, missus, if you axes me to do ought.

Mrs. M. What a dreadful situation for me. James, give me my Eau de Cologne. (*he gives it to her*)

March. James, give me a book.

Mrs. M. James, give me my handkerchief.

March. James, give me my handkerchief.

Banks. Yes, sir. Why, master, you've got it in your hand!

March. Blockhead! do you not see it is in my left hand, and I want it in my right! (*JAMES changes it*)

Mrs. M. James, my fan.

March. James, a fan for me.

Mrs. M. James, —

March. James, —

Mrs. M. James, —

March. James, scratch my nose.

Banks. Oh, oh! it's come! You mun James for yourself now. (*sinks into chair, C.*) Your cruelty has brought it on. Oh, my legs! my legs!

Mrs. M. Do not be absurd. Go and tell cook to serve up dinner directly—you can be ill after.

Banks. Nay, missus, I mun be ill before; my only cure is doing nought.

Mrs. M. Sally, Sally! (*rings loudly*)

Enter SALLY, *very pale, head tied up, and staggering, L.*

What! has the girl been drinking?

Sally. No, I'm very ill, missus.

Mrs. M. You ill *too*!

Banks. Nay, we're ill *three*, and all on us got the same complaint.

Mrs. M. If you make that dreadful noise I shall be obliged to get up.

Banks. Doan't 'ee do that missus, you'll hurt yerself, then we shall be ill *all four*, an' you won't be able to nuss us.

Mrs. M. Where is cook?

Sally. She is dreadful ill, mam, and gone to bed.

Mrs. M. Gone to bed, and I'm dying with hunger—where is my dinner?

Sally. Gone among the cinders, mam, and all burnt up.

Banks. Yes, missus, after I got a snack, all the fat were in the fire.

March. Never mind, dear, we'll have water-gruel all round.

Mrs. M. (*jumping up*) I hate water gruel.

Sally. So do I.

Banks. Yes, we all hates water-gruel, I prefers beans and bacon, an' plenty of it.

Mrs. M. (*walking about in front of stage*) Sally, you—you—impudent girl, go directly and get me something!

{ (*this is spoken
quickly—he runs
from one to the
other each time of
being called.*) }

Sally. I ain't got strength—I'm going, catch me, James.

Banks. I'll catch 'ee lass, tumble into my arms. (*he holds her up*)

Mrs. M. (*fanning herself and stamping her foot with passion*) Such conduct before my face, leave the room you impertinent—you lazy creatures.

Banks. What an unfeelin' missus it is. (*rising*) Come along lass, lean on me.

Sally. Yes, James, take me away, I shall be dead if I'm not alive by to-morrow. (*he leads her off, L.*)

Mrs. M. Herbert, Herbert, how can you lie there, do you not see the state I am in?

March. It appears to be rather a warm state.

Mrs. M. Why do you not say what is to be done?

March. I think you had better follow cook's example, and go to bed.

Mrs. M. How can you talk such nonsense? I have had nothing to eat since breakfast and am starving. (*HERBERT cries out with apparent pain and pretends to be very ill, her manner changes to the greatest anxiety*) Oh, my dear, what is the matter? Oh, my poor darling, he is dying!

March. Oh, oh, I'm dead—at least I'm dying—water, water!

Mrs. M. (*very frightened*) I will fetch you some, my darling, but please don't die yet. (*runs out, L., very quickly.*)

March. (*laughing*) Ha, ha! then the true woman came out—bother the artificial one to give me all this trouble; she has not moved so quickly since the last ball she attended. The doctor's receipt bids fair for a cure after all—she returns. I must have a relapse. (*whitens face with powder puff*)

Enter MRS. MARCHMONT, L., *quickly, with glass of water.*

Mrs. M. Here is the water, dear.

March. (*taking some*) Oh, dear, oh! I am very ill.

Mrs. M. (*bathes his temples, &c.*) Where is the pain now?

March. I feel so faint, if I had but something to eat!

Mrs. M. I'll run and get a biscuit.

March. No, no, a biscuit is of no use, a chop, a chop, I must have a chop.

Mrs. M. But there is no one to cook it.

March. Cook it yourself, dear—oh, oh!

Mrs. M. I never cooked a chop in all my life!

March. Then it is about time you learnt, I shall die if you do not—oh, oh!

Mrs. M. What shall I do? (*running about confused*) Herbert, darling, shall I try and cook one here?

March. Cook it anywhere.

Mrs. M. I will, wait a little, don't be impatient, I'll soon get the gridiron. (*runs out L. quickly*)

March. By Jove! this is a success—a pretty chop I expect it will be when it is done, black as my hat—never mind if burnt to a cinder—I'll try and eat the bone for her sake.

Mrs. M. (*speaking without*) Herbert, you are not dead yet, are you darling?

March. No dear, the thought of the chop is keeping me alive.

Mrs. M. (*without*) Very well, here I come. (*crash*)

March. There you go I should say.

Mrs. M. (*without*) Oh, Herbert, I have broken the plates.

March. Never mind, pick up the pieces.

Enter MRS. MARCHMONT, L., with her dress tucked up in front, a bib apron on, carrying a gridiron and a chop on a plate.

Mrs. M. How dreadfully clumsy of me to be sure, but I have got the gridiron; now to put the chop on the fire. (*does so, and awkwardly upsets it into the ashes*) Oh, Herbert, the chop has fallen among the ashes.

March. Pick it out, dear, it will save the expense of pepper. (*after doing so, runs out bringing in small tray and cloth, proceeds to lay it on the table, R.*)

Mrs. M. Oh, these knives are so sharp I've cut my finger, and there I have upset the salt. (*it falls off table*)

March. Never mind, accidents will happen.

Mrs. M. Do you think I had better turn the chop over on the other side?

March. By all means give it a turn!

Mrs. M. It has fallen right into the fire—oh, dear! oh, dear!

March. It will only cook more quickly.

Mrs. M. What a dear good hubby you are, you ought to be very cross, with a stupid awkward little wife.

March. Not when she's trying to do her best.

Mrs. M. (*attending to chop*) The chop is a little black, but you will not mind that will you? I really will learn better, how any sensible person would laugh at me! I who never am satisfied with the servants, and a pretty example I set them. Do you think the chop is done?

March. It is about done for, now dear, I think. (*she takes it off fire and is bringing it to table, DR. BRUNT, MRS. BRUNT and SMART, all have entered, and stand applauding*)

All. Bravo, bravo! very good indeed.

Mrs. M. (*very confused*) Oh, my, I shall drop.

Mrs. B. Not the chop (*taking it*) no child, you have no need to; you are something like a wife now. I'll finish your cooking (*places it on fire*) it is not half done yet, and next time my dear put a little pepper and butter to it.

Mrs. M. Thank you for telling me, but doctor do look to my poor dear husband, he is so ill. (*the doctor with mock gravity goes*)

to MARCHMONT and feels his pulse, they look at each other and burst out laughing) Then you are not dying after all?

March. No, not yet—are you sorry?

Mrs. M. Oh, you wicked boy, I'll never forgive you. (*half crying*)

March. Oh, yes you will, I am quite sure. (*going to her*) It was a ruse adopted from the doctor's advice, to show you how foolish you have been in assuming an affectation quite foreign to your nature. Consider how soon I must of necessity tire of it, henceforth, let me love the true woman, not grow weary of the artificial one.

Mrs. M. You are quite right, I see it now before it is too late, you shall find me a wife worthy of the name. But I was forgetting, my apron—

March. Let it remain, you have not looked so pretty since the day we were married. That is better than your wedding dress. Smart, rouse up the servants, administer half a pail of water to the gardener, and give the cook and housemaid, a tattoo on the tea-tray will you?

Smart. (*aside*) Won't I, now for my revenge on cabbage stalks and highlows. (*aloud*) Consider it done, sir. (*exit L.*)

March. Doctor allow me to thank you.

Brunt. Do not mention it, I shall pride myself on this cure for the rest of my life.

Mrs. B. And I am proud of you, my dear old boy, for it takes a clever man to conquer a woman's whims. (*great noise, JAMES calling out, crash is heard, SMART runs on, his hat broken and over his eyes, JAMES follows in a rage and SALLY holding him back; SMART runs over to R. calling Help!*)

Banks. Let me get him, a bit of a stuck up Jack-a-dandy—I'll let thee know.

Smart. (*looking at his hat which is smashed*) Keep him off or I'm a dead man, he has ruined my beaver—the over-grown hephant.

Brunt. (*to BANKS*) Come, my friend, don't excite yourself or you will have a fit, and I shall have to bleed you.

Banks. Nay doctor, I'll do that for thee—where's the five pounds thou promised?

Brunt. (*giving two notes*) There it is, five pounds a-piece.

Banks. (*taking it*) Thank 'ee, sir. (*pocketing both*)

Sally. James, where is my share?

Banks. In my pocket, thou'lt be my wife, so we may as well begin as we mean to go on. A wife never has nought—what's thine is mine, what's mine is my own—that's marriage law.

Smart. Disgusting mercenarian!

Mrs. B. Law indeed, it is one of the wrongs, we poor suffering women intend to set right; but come, they are waiting for us at the hall, shall we go?

Mrs. M. Yes, I consent, I shall only be a few minutes—but first, I quite forgot my chop (*going to it*) it must be done by this time.

March. If it is, we'll share it with our friends, instead of a wedding cake; the bone shall be mounted in silver, and kept under a glass case, to remind us of this our second honeymoon. (Mrs. MARCHMONT *has taken the gridiron off the fire, and is just removing chop when MARCHMONT stops her. At the same time LIEUTENANT WORTHINGTON and MISS SMEATON enter at back, and remain there*) There is a lovely picture of domestic bliss.

No matter now, whate'er may befall,

As a wife she will prove "NOT SO BAD AFTER ALL."

DR. and MRS BRUNT stand R. C., *looking on with pleasure*, JAMES and SALLY *with amazement at their mistress* down L., SMART *woefully looking at his hat* down R., WORTHINGTON *waving his hat at back.*

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